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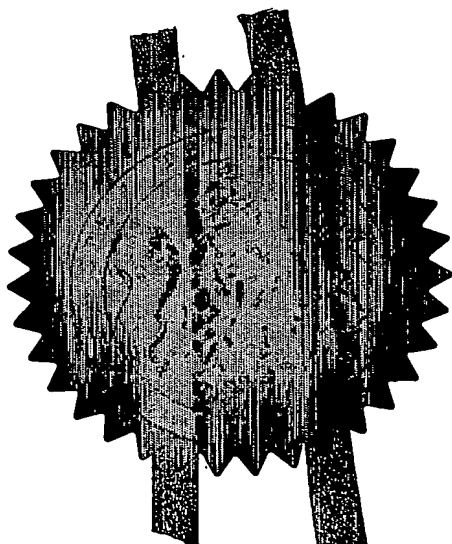
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Dated

21 September 2004

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GB 0314623.0

By virtue of a direction given under Section 30 of the Patents Act 1977, the application is proceeding in the name of:

**SYMBIAN SOFTWARE LTD,
2-6 Boundary Row,
Southwark,
LONDON,
SE1 8HP,
United Kingdom**

Incorporated in the United Kingdom,

[ADP No. 08843435001]

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24JUN03 EB17201-1 D10092
P01/7700 0.00-0314623.0

Your reference Drive Swap (UK)

0314623.0

The
**Patent
Office**

Request for grant of a
Patent

Form 1/77

Patents Act 1977

1 Title of invention

A portable computing device with a non-volatile
memory drive

2. Applicant's details



First or only applicant

2a

If applying as a corporate body: Corporate Name

Symbian Limited

Country

GB (1977 ACT) APPLICATION FILED

22/6/04

2b

If applying as an individual or partnership

Surname

Forenames

2c

Address

Sentinel House
16 Harcourt Street
London

UK Postcode

W1H 1DS

Country

GB

ADP Number

7573132002

<input type="checkbox"/> 2d	Second applicant (If any) Corporate Name	
	Country	
2e	Surname	
	Forenames	
2f	Address	
	UK Postcode	
	Country	
	ADP Number	
3	Address for service	
	Agent's Name	Origin Limited
	Agent's Address	52 Muswell Hill Road London
	Agent's postcode	N10 3JR
	Agent's ADP Number	003274 7270457002

4 Reference Number

Drive Swap (UK)

5 Claiming an earlier application date

An earlier filing date is claimed:

Yes ☐

No ☒

Number of earlier
application or patent number

Filing date

15 (4) (Divisional)

☐

8(3)

☐

12(6)

☐

37(4)

☐

6 Declaration of priority

Country of filing

Priority Application Number

Filing Date

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7 Inventorship

The applicant(s) are the sole inventors/joint inventors

Yes ☐

No ☒

8 Checklist

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Drawings 0 *[Signature]*

Priority Documents Yes/No ☒

Translations of Priority Documents Yes/No ☒

Patents Form 7/77 Yes/No ☒

Patents Form 9/77 Yes/No ☒ *[Signature]*

Patents Form 10/77 Yes/No ☒

9 Request

We request the grant of a patent on the basis of this application

Signed: *[Signature]*
(Origin Limited)

Date: 23 June 2007

A PORTABLE COMPUTING DEVICE WITH A NON-VOLATILE MEMORY DRIVE

5 FIELD OF THE INVENTION

This invention relates to portable computing devices with non-volatile (e.g. flash) memory drives that are used to boot the device to a functional GUI (graphical user interface) – i.e. load the necessary files for the device to display the device GUI so that the device is operational by a user.

10

DESCRIPTION OF THE PRIOR ART

Many portable computing devices, such as Smartphones, use some form of Flash non-volatile memory for internal data storage that is required to boot up to a functional device

15 GUI (i.e. to a functional state that include the graphical user interface). In many cases, this is the C: drive

There are two possible types of Flash memory: NOR and NAND. Each has its own limitations and quirks. But the problems are essentially the same:

- 20 a) Flash wears out – despite attempts at "wear levelling" there is always the possibility that a part of the Flash that contained data will be found to have failed when that data is required.
- b) The battery charge may drop below the minimum required to run the device while data is being written to the Flash and it cannot necessarily be assumed that there will be enough spare battery power to fully complete the write.
- 25 c) It is more likely that the battery will be removed from a mobile phone while it is switched on than with a PDA. For example, many mobile phones require the battery to be removed to get at the SIM card and it cannot be assumed that the user will turn the phone off before removing the battery.
- d) There is a limit to how much protection can be added to the content of the Flash.

There is always going to be a trade-off between the degree of protection and the time and data overhead required.

- 5 e) Using Flash as a medium can involve long-running cleanup operations, which we may prefer to abandon when the phone is switched off, rather than wait for them to continue.
- f) Glitches – power or data bus glitches, mainly during power up or down, can occasionally upset a Flash.
- g) There could be defects in the code that implements protection of the data. This possibility should not be ignored.
- 10 h) One other point worth bearing in mind is the possibility of malicious code (viruses and the like) deliberately corrupting the drive.

Yet it is necessary to have a working C: drive in order to start enough code for the device to do anything useful. There are two conventional approaches to solving this:

- 15 a) redesign all the code so that is able to run without a C: drive, or
- b) if the C: drive is corrupt, automatically reformat it.

SUMMARY OF THE PRESENT INVENTION

In a first aspect of the invention, there is a portable computing device, in which an internal non-volatile memory drive that is used to boot to a functional device GUI is automatically swapped with a temporary RAM drive if the internal non-volatile memory drive is found to be corrupted.

This is much easier and quicker to implement than redesigning all the code to be able to run without an internal non-volatile memory on the C: drive, and also avoids the need to have a lot of extra error handling and fallback conditions within applications. Typically it also means that applications can continue to offer much of their normal functionality that would not be possible without a C: drive. It is also much more acceptable to end-users than automatically reformatting a corrupt C: drive since that process would lead to the loss of potentially recoverable user data. The non-volatile memory is typically Flash memory, but the principle of the present invention can be applied to any kind of non-volatile memory that could become corrupted such as ceprom, hard drives or future non-volatile memory products.

A RAM drive is not conventionally used at all in the boot up of portable computing devices that use Flash memory for data storage.

Default configuration files may be automatically copied to the RAM drive. These may, for example, allow at least emergency voice calls to be made. Higher levels of functionality are also possible. A RAM drive is a portion of device RAM that provides the same data storage capabilities as the Flash memory but is volatile. It uses part of the device RAM to store the files and data needed to boot the device to a GUI that is at least partly functional.

Further, the corrupt drive may be automatically moved to a different drive letter to allow subsequent reformatting. A user notification asking if reformatting should take place may then be displayed.

Other display messages may include the following:

- a user notification that the temporary drive is in use;
- a user notification that save options are disabled;
- 5 • a user notification that save options are not available;
- a user option which, if selected, initiates an attempt to extract data from the corrupt internal non-volatile memory drive.

10 A second aspect of the invention is a method of enabling a portable computing device to boot to a functional device GUI when an internal non-volatile memory drive that is normally used to boot up from is found to be corrupted, comprising the step of automatically swapping the corrupt non-volatile memory drive with a temporary RAM drive.

15 A third aspect is operating system software, for a portable computing device comprising an internal non-volatile memory drive that is normally used to boot up the device to a functional GUI, in which the operating system software automatically swaps the non-volatile memory drive with a temporary RAM drive if the non-volatile memory drive is found to be corrupted.

20

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

The invention will be described with reference to an implementation using the SymbianOS from Symbian Limited of London, United Kingdom. A SymbianOS based device always has a C: drive which is the internal read/write drive, and the system cannot boot to a functional smartphone GUI without a usable C: drive. The C: drive is normally Flash-based which means that there is always the possibility of it becoming corrupt. This invention envisages a method of replacing a corrupt C: drive with a temporary RAM drive so that a SymbianOS device remains usable in the event of a failure of the C: drive.

Overview

The procedure is this:

- a) Early in boot check whether the C: drive is corrupt (exactly how this is done will be discussed later)
- 15 b) If the drive is corrupt it is replaced with a RAM drive, possibly also creating some default files on it. (These default files may be created programmatically or may be copied from templates held elsewhere in the ROM of the device.)
- c) The corrupt drive is moved to a different drive letter so it can still be accessed to reformat it (and possibly also attempt to extract any files that may still be accessible.)
- 20 d) The GUI will detect that the C: drive has been replaced with a RAM drive and will at least inform the user of the situation.

What happens next can be configured to the device manufacturer's requirements. The user may have the options to either reformat the drive or return the device to a service centre. A more user-friendly approach would be to allow the user to at least call emergency numbers.

25 Depending on the functionality provided by the device, it might be possible for it to remain largely usable as normal, though of course any data saved will be lost when the device is turned off, so either save options should be disabled from the GUI or the user should be warned that any newly created data will be lost.

When is a drive "corrupt"?

We will consider here what is meant by "corrupt" in the context of the present invention. First, the data in the file system can be divided into two parts – user data and metadata. User data is the content of files. Metadata is the information used internally by the file system to record its state. If the user data is corrupt but the metadata is not then technically the file system is not corrupt because it still knows what state it is in. Realistically though it is unlikely to be of any use in this condition. It is also possible that the file system is not totally corrupt – as an example Symbian's LPFS file system will enter read-only mode if it is unable to satisfactorily determine its state but existing data is still likely to be valid.

10 Therefore the likely failure cases are:

a) Drive is totally corrupt, existing data cannot be read and new data cannot be written.

b) Some or all existing user data is corrupt but metadata is valid, so it is still possible to create and write to new files.

15 c) Some or all existing user data is valid but metadata is ambiguous, truncated or in some way damaged; in this case probably at least some of the existing data can still be accessed but any attempt to write new data could make things worse and may end up in case (a).

d) Drive is read only – the same as (c) except that making the drive read-only enforces "no new data".

20 In practice it is unlikely that the device will be able to operate in any of these situations. It will want to read existing files, which *may* be corrupt, and very likely it will also want to write new data. Whatever condition the file system is in, we can call them all "corrupt" with reference to the present invention.

How to detect corruption

25 There are two methods – if the file system performs some sort of integrity scan when it is mounted then if the scan fails the mount should also fail with an error indicating drive corruption. Alternatively some sort of scan of the file system could be invoked to determine its integrity. A spot-check on the validity of files known to be essential for the correct

operation of the device is another method to determine whether the drive is corrupt. How corruption should be detected is really outside the scope of this document since it depends on the type of file system, the degree of thoroughness required, the time available, and what files are critical to the system.

5 Drive swapping

The swapping of the corrupt drive with a RAM drive must happen early in boot before any code that is dependant on the C: drive. The ideal place in SymbianOS is ESTART, which is the first program run after the kernel and file server have been started. ESTART will do something like this:

10

```
TVolumeInfo;
TInt r = TheFs.Volume( info );
if( r == KErrNone )
{
    // drive says it is ok, so if we want to perform a further
    // integrity check do it now
    r = IntegrityCheck();
}
if( r != KErrNone )
{
    20    UnmountDriveC();
        MountRamDriveOnC();
        MountFlashDriveOnAlternateDrive();
        CopyDefaultFilesToC();
    25    }
```

At the end of this either the C: drive will be the normal Flash drive, or it will be a temporary RAM drive and the Flash will have been moved to a different drive letter.

GUI behaviour

The GUI must be able to detect that the temporary RAM drive is in use because it has to at least inform the user that the Flash is corrupt. This can be done conveniently in SymbianOS by checking the media type of the C: drive (RFs::Drive function) which will be EMediaRam if the drives have been swapped.

The first thing the GUI will want to do is to tell the user that the drive is corrupt and also offer the opportunity to reformat it – important data may already have been backed up and the user is happy to just reformat.

- Further GUI handling will be partly dependent on the device capabilities and partly on the licensee requirements. The device could be limited to just emergency calls. Or it could be mostly functional but the detection of the RAM drive could be used to disable save options in programs (e.g. calendars and address books) or warn the user that any data saved will be lost when the device is turned off. There could even be the option to attempt to extract information from the corrupt drive – for the cases where the drive is still partly accessible – attempting to find address books, calendars etc on the corrupt drive.

1.1 Glossary

The following technical terms and abbreviations are used within this document.

Term	Definition
ROM	A non-volatile, non-writeable form of memory. This term can also be used to apply to Flash memory that is used as a non-writeable memory
RAM	Random access memory
Flash	type of non-volatile storage
NOR	type of Flash
NAND	type of Flash
LFFS	Symbian file system for use on NOR Flash
GUI	Graphical User Interface

Term	Definition
PDA	Portable (or Personal) Digital Assistant (i.e. handheld computer or palmtop)
SIM	Subscriber Identity Module, used in GSM phones
Estart	In SymbianOS 7.x the program started immediately after the file server
File server	In SymbianOS a program that provides basic file services to applications
RAM Drive	A section of the device main RAM used as a volatile data storage medium in the form of a file system

CLAIMS

1. A portable computing device, in which an internal non-volatile memory drive that is
5 used to boot to a functional device GUI is automatically swapped with a temporary RAM
drive if the internal non-volatile memory drive is found to be corrupted.
2. The device of Claim 1 in which the non-volatile memory is a flash memory.
- 10 3. The device of Claim 1 in which the temporary RAM drive allows at least emergency
voice calls to be made.
4. The device of Claim 1 in which default configuration files are automatically copied to
the RAM drive.
- 15 5. The device of Claim 1 in which the corrupt drive is automatically moved to a
different drive letter to allow subsequent reformatting.
6. The device of Claim 1 which displays a user notification asking if reformatting
20 should take place.
7. The device of Claim 1 which displays a user notification that the temporary RAM
drive is in use.
- 25 8. The device of Claim 1 which displays a user notification that save options are
disabled.
9. The device of Claim 1 which displays a user notification that save options are not
30 available.

10. The device of Claim 1 which displays a user option which, if selected, initiates an attempt to extract data from the corrupt internal flash memory drive.
- 5 11. The device of Claim 1 in which the internal non-volatile memory drive is found to be corrupted if any of the following apply:
 - (a) existing data cannot be read;
 - (b) new data cannot be written;
 - (c) user data is corrupt but metadata is not corrupt;
 - 10 (d) user data is not corrupt but metadata is corrupt;
 - (e) it is in a read-only state.
12. A method of enabling a portable computing device to boot to a functional device GUI when an internal non-volatile memory drive that is normally used to boot up from is
15 found to be corrupted, comprising the step of automatically swapping the corrupt non-volatile memory drive with a temporary RAM drive.
13. The method of Claim 12 in which the non-volatile memory is a flash memory.
- 20 14. The method of Claim 12 in which the temporary RAM drive allows at least emergency voice calls to be made.
15. The method of Claim 12 in which default configuration files are automatically copied to the RAM drive.
- 25 16. The method of Claim 12 in which the corrupt drive is automatically moved to a different drive letter to allow subsequent reformatting.
17. The method of Claim 12 in which the device displays a user notification asking if
30 reformatting should take place.

18. The method of Claim 12 in which the device displays a user notification that the temporary RAM drive is in use.
- 5 19. The method of Claim 12 in which the device displays a user notification that save options are disabled.
20. The method of Claim 12 in which the device displays a user notification that save options are not available.
- 10 21. The method of Claim 12 in which the device displays a user option which, if selected, initiates an attempt to extract data from the corrupt drive.
22. The method of Claim 12 in which the internal non-volatile memory drive is found to be corrupted if any of the following apply:
- 15 (a) existing data cannot be read;
- (b) new data cannot be written;
- (c) user data is corrupt but metadata is not corrupt;
- (d) user data is not corrupt but metadata is corrupt;
- 20 (e) it is in a read-only state.
23. Operating system software, for a portable computing device comprising an internal non-volatile memory drive that is normally used to boot up the device to a functional GUI, in which the operating system software automatically swaps the non-volatile memory drive with a temporary RAM drive if the non-volatile memory drive is found to be corrupted.
- 25

Abstract**5 A PORTABLE COMPUTING DEVICE WITH A NON-VOLATILE MEMORY DRIVE**

A portable computing device, in which an internal non-volatile memory drive that is used to boot to a functional device GUI is automatically swapped with a temporary RAM drive if the
10 internal non-volatile memory drive is found to be corrupted.

The non-volatile memory is typically Flash memory, but the principle of the present invention can be applied to any kind of non-volatile memory that could become corrupted. A RAM drive is not conventionally used at all in the boot up of portable computing devices
15 that boot using Flash memory.

Default configuration files may be automatically copied to the RAM drive. These may, for example, allow at least emergency voice calls to be made.

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